

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 8

THE VILLAGE VOICE
3-9 February 1982

NAT HENTOFF: 'I Liked Gene Debs Kind of Man'

"... from my very boyhood I was made to feel the wrongs of labor."

—Eugene V. Debs, New York Comrade, June 1904

"... We get tired of eating hamburger all the time while the rich get taken care of and wine and dine."

—Howard E. Sellers, UAW Local 1765, Lima, Ohio, UAW Solidarity monthly, January 1982

While Jerry Wurf was going to New York University, this young socialist from Brighton Beach with the foghorn voice worked part-time at the Garden Cafeteria on the Lower East Side. On the boss's time and on his own time, Jerry organized his co-workers into a union; and when he left college, Wurf became a full-time organizer for Local 448, Food Checkers and Cashiers Union of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees. But he was no ordinary organizer.

Jerry swept through those Lower East Side restaurants with such ferocious efficiency that their Yiddish-speaking proprietors came to speak of him, in muttered curses, as *malach hamaves*, the Angel of Death.

He was some piece of union work, that Wurf. As he went on to organize for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), he showed, beyond anybody's doubt, that he had found his true vocation. Irwin Ross, a long-term observer of the labor scene, described the Wurf of those years as an "impassioned, extemporaneous speaker who could hold a crowd of laborers spell-bound for 90 minutes without a note in his hand."

And another vintage labor reporter, Patrick Owens, wrote that Wurf was "a wonder to behold as he toured a strike front, his gawky body hustling down a picket line as his compelling voice exhorted the men holding up that line."

Wurf was a man on fire, consumed by the twin dreams of trade unionism and democratic socialism. As a kid in Brooklyn, Jerry briefly had a Stalinist mentor among his classmates at Madison High School. But the baleful rigidity of Communist doctrine led Wurf to join the scrappy and scrapping socialists among his peers.

"What attracted me about them," Wurf once told me in whoops of laughter, "is that all those socialist sons of bitches disagreed with each other. And that was great! I love to work through an argument that way." (That last love Wurf forgot sometime after he became head of AFSCME years later. By then, Wurf relished criticism directed against him with as much delight as most bosses do anywhere.)

During his springtime years, in any case, Jerry did develop politically into a clear-headed anti-Communist who also knew that capitalism was the enemy of anybody who has to hire himself out to survive. However, he and his socialist comrades spent so much of their high school time fighting the Communists in the student body that, as Jerry recalled, "We never did have any time left over to fight the capitalists." He more than made up for that later as a trade unionist because, although he dealt, in AFSCME, with state and local governments as employers, his continual analyses of built-in injustices in the economy focused persistently on the rapacious private sector and its special alliances within government.

Wurf was grateful for having had all those arguments with Communists because, he said, "it was marvelous training in how to use your mind. And fighting them, you also learned that a radical, particularly, has to remember the basic premises of freedom. That's why Eugene Debs was a hero of mine. He never became a zealot, and he was never taken in by the Communists. He remained a very American kind of man. And as this kind of socialist, I became imbued with a belief in rational change, not in some kind of instant rhetorical revolution."

As the years went on, Wurf became head of an insurgent slate in AFSCME. Under the union's longtime leadership, the Young Turks felt, AFSCME was not doing enough organizing in the big cities and was devoting too much energy to strengthening civil service commissions rather than getting into the trench warfare of collective bargaining for public employees. ("Do we believe in collective bargaining or collective begging?" was one of the slogans of Wurf and other dissidents.)

In 1964, at the AFSCME convention in Denver, Wurf narrowly defeated the incumbent, Arnold Zander, who had founded AFSCME. When Wurf moved to Washington, where the union's national headquarters was and still is, he was stunned to find a hidden nest of CIA agents on the premises. Literally on the premises.

"On the third floor of the building the union had then," Wurf recalled, "I found these guys wearing trench coats—I'm not kidding—and speaking Spanish. I couldn't get any straight answers as to who they were, but then a very high government official called and asked me to meet with some intelligence people.

"It was like a Cold War movie. I was taken to a 'safe house' in Maryland. There they told me that AFSCME had been functioning as a conduit for funneling CIA money abroad. It had been going on since 1958, and the mechanism for the union's transfer of the funds had been our membership in Public Services International, which is composed of public-employee union leaders from many countries.

"One of AFSCME's representatives to PSI," Wurf continued, "was a secret CIA agent. And through him, CIA funds went to anti-Communist sectors of the European labor movement and to political parties abroad favored by the CIA. Hell, the money was even being used to run guns to certain Latin American and African countries."

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE I-5

CHICAGO TRIBUNE
3 OCTOBER 1981

Britain fed Russ bad Concorde data: spy

LONDON (Reuters)—Britain's secret service fed false information about the Anglo-French supersonic Concorde airliner to the Soviet Union in the late 1960s, according to a former British spy.

In a television interview taped for later airing, ex-agent Greville Wynne said the "misinformation" was passed through a Soviet spy who had been discovered working on the British design side of the project.

Wynne said the Soviet version of the aircraft, the Tupolev-144, was outwardly identical to the Concorde but had faulty

parts, was noisy, and could carry only half of the Concorde's load.

A Tupolev-144 crashed at the 1973 Paris air show, killing 15 persons.

"WE HAVE NOT been able to check the Concorde story," the producer of the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) program said.

A British Foreign Office spokesman told reporters: "We do not comment on matters of this nature." British Aerospace, joint makers of the Concorde, also would not comment.

Wynne said a designer in the British Aircraft Corp., later merged into the British Aerospace group, originally sold secrets about the VC-10 aircraft to Moscow.

He passed his information through an East German double agent, who betrayed him to the British secret service, MI-6.

The "mole," according to Wynne, was not arrested but was switched from VC-10 to Concorde design. When he leaked plans of the supersonic project, they were intercepted by MI-6 and altered.

Wynne, 62, now living on the resort island of Majorca, was arrested on a trip to Hungary and was put on trial in Moscow in 1963 with Soviet double agent Oleg Penkovsky.

PENKOVSKY was sentenced to death, and Wynne was jailed for eight years. But he served only 18 months before being exchanged for Soviet agent Gordon Lonsdale, who had been jailed in Britain.

Wynne said his intelligence career continued after his return to London in 1964 and brought him into contact with the Concorde affair.